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**EXPLORING CLT PRACTICES IN SAUDI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS**

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***I dedicate this work to my mother and my wife.***

## Contents

Title Page .....	I
DEDICATION .....	II
CONTENTS .....	III
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES .....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	V
ABSTRACT .....	VI
Chapters	
Introduction .....	1
1. Background .....	3
2. Literature Review .....	8
3. Methodology .....	16
4. Results and analysis .....	21
5. Discussion .....	32
Implications and conclusions .....	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	39
APPENDIXES .....	41

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1</b> .....	22
<b>Table 2</b> .....	23
<b>Table 3</b> .....	24
<b>Table 4</b> .....	25
<b>Table 5</b> .....	25
<b>Table 6</b> .....	26
<b>Table 7</b> .....	27
<b>Table 8</b> .....	28

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## **ABSTRACT**

This is a research study conducted on 17 teachers who teach English in Saudi international schools. It mainly aims at exploring teaching practices in these schools in terms of the principle of communicative language teaching (CLT). It also investigates the appropriateness of CLT in this context from the point of view of teachers. Two research tools are used in this study. The first one is a questionnaire taken by 17 teachers. The second tool is the interviews held with four teachers. Several findings have been resulted from this study. First, CLT is found to be the most frequently used teaching approach in Saudi international schools. In addition, some teachers in these schools use other approaches in parallel with CLT. In general, we can say that CLT principles are applied in teaching English in these schools. However, teachers' practices in terms of role of the teacher and role of the learners still do not reflect CLT principles. On the other hand, CLT is found to be appropriate in Saudi international schools from the teachers' point of view; however, teachers see that there are some challenges hindering the use of CLT in these schools. These challenges include the educational system, syllabus outlines and the assessment procedures. One important fact highlighted by this study is the importance of context in language learning and teaching. It shows that some contextual factors may have positive impact on teaching English in these schools. However, other factors may influence negatively on the learning process in Saudi international schools.

## INTRODUCTION

International schools have witnessed a rapid growth recently in the Gulf region. According to the very latest ISC (International Schools Consultancy Group) data, “there are currently 1,213 international schools in the Middle East teaching over 1 million students. This is 30 percent of all international school students worldwide” (Saudi Gazette). Saudi Arabia as reported by ISC comes in the second place after UAE in the number of international schools. There are about 195 international schools in Saudi Arabia.

These international schools are English-medium schools that often deliver international curricula. One of the dominant teaching approaches in these schools is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is also, as described by Bax (2003), one of the dominant teaching approaches around the world. CLT emerges as a development of the teaching approaches that reflects a changing in the view of language nature. Communicative competence is considered as the target goal of this approach. As a result of the widespread use of this approach, several criticisms have been raised about the use of CLT. One of these criticisms is that the communicative language teaching is not culturally appropriate everywhere.

Two main reasons are behind my interest in this area. One important reason is that there is a little research about English teaching approaches in Saudi international schools, or even about these approaches in the Saudi context in general. However, the Saudi context has a great importance in terms of the number of students as well as the funds invested in this area. Another reason is my professional background. As a teacher in a Saudi international school, I observed that the communicative approach is often used in many international schools. However, I noticed that the teachers’ practices are not typical to the principles of the communicative language teaching.

After some informal discussions with a group of teachers, I have concluded that not all teachers see that the communicative approach is appropriate in the Saudi context.

This study mainly aims at exploring the actual practices of teachers in Saudi international schools in terms of the core principles of the communicative approach. The study will identify to what the extent the teachers in Saudi international schools deploy the principles of CLT in teaching English. Another important aim is to investigate the teachers' perceptions about the appropriateness of CLT in teaching English in these schools.

This study could be a basis for more research about the use of the communicative approach in Saudi Arabia. It also highlights the actual practices of English teaching in Saudi schools. In addition, it will develop an argument about the appropriateness of the communicative approach in teaching English in Saudi international schools. Furthermore, this study would be beneficial for policy makers, teachers and researchers.

In the following sections, a background about the Saudi international schools will be presented. Then, a literature review about the communicative language teaching will be made. After that, the methodology of the study as well as the research aims and questions will be set. Finally, the data will be analyzed and discussed.



## **CHAPTER (1)**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **1.1 ELT in Saudi Arabia**

Arabic is the first and official language in Saudi Arabia. It is used as the main medium of instruction in most educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. Thus, English is delivered as a foreign language. English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia has developed gradually (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). It started as a compulsory subject that the students learned just to pass the examination. However, over time and as a result of the globalization and the latest technological developments, English starts to receive more importance than before. Consequently, Saudi Arabia exerts a lot of efforts to increase the proficiency of English at all levels of education. Thus, it could be more involved in the international dialogues at all levels (Alresheed 2012). These efforts appear in the educational reform that includes new textbooks, new objectives, teacher trainings and new tools of assessment etc. (Batawi 2006). Several educational institutions are involved in English teaching in Saudi Arabia. These institutions include public and national schools, universities and training centers. One of the emerging institutions that starts to play an important role is the international schools.

#### **1.2 Saudi International Schools**

International schools as stated by Hayden and Thompson (2008) were mainly established for migration purposes. However, over time the need for a high quality and global education becomes the main purpose of establishing the international schools. International schools as described by Hayden and Thompson (2008) have some common features that make them different from the national ones. These features may include the curriculum, administration and even students. As reported by ISC, there are about 195 international schools in Saudi Arabia. These schools were mainly for non-Saudi at the beginning, however many Saudi

students have started to join these kinds of schools. Al Riyadh Arabic Magazine (as stated in Saudi Gazette) reported that an increasing number of parents favor the international schools rather than the public or the national ones. Saudi students who join the international schools often have some common features. Their parents are often businessmen, employees in multinational companies or holding higher degrees from western universities. The parents and the students are somehow impressed by the western civilization. Some of the students often have a regular annual visit to Europe or America.

Several reasons are behind the preference of the international schools. One important reason is that the parents see that these schools are helpful in developing their children's English language. Another reason is that the parents believe that these schools deliver modern education better than that delivered by public and private schools (Parker 2014). As a result of the growth of the international schools, Saudi ministry of education set some conditions for the establishment of private international institution. These conditions include international accreditation, including subjects such as Arabic, history and social studies and curricula should be appropriate with Sharia (Islamic Law).

### **1.3 Educational System of the Saudi International Schools**

The Saudi international schools are often English-medium ones. English is the core subject in this kind of schools. It is delivered in 10 periods out of 40 periods a week. Each period lasts for 45 minutes. Saudi international schools, as stated by Hayden and Thompson (2008) deliver international curricula such as International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). They follow international educational standards such as California standards for public schools (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>). International schools use international course books such as Scott Foresman and they are accredited by international bodies such as AdvanceED (<http://www.advanc-ed.org/>).

Concerning the procedures of admission in the international schools, they vary from one school to another. Students could be selected according to a general interview, a placement test or an

IQ test. The normal class size is also variable; however, it often does not exceed 25 students. The international schools often start from KG ending at grade 12. They include primary, middle and secondary levels.

#### **1.4 ELT in Saudi International Schools**

The Teacher and administrators of the international schools are often experienced and highly qualified. They often come from different countries. Some nationals of the host country could be recruited in the international schools (Hayden and Thompson (2008). The same situation exists in the Saudi context. Saudi international schools recruit English teachers from different countries. They recruit native speakers of English who often hold a teaching certificate such as CELTA or TESOL. They also recruit Arab nationals from Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Lebanon who often hold bachelor degrees in Education. Generally, few Saudi teachers are recruited in the Saudi international schools. The Saudi teachers always teach Arabic and Islamic studies.

##### **1.4.1 ELT practices and conceptions**

Hayden and Thompson (2008) argue that little research has been made about the international schools. There is no accurate information about the number of these schools. However, as a teacher in one of the Saudi international schools, I have observed some common teaching practices in my school. First, teaching techniques such as group work, pair work and role plays are often used in the English classrooms. Some teachers consider these techniques as essential tools in the EFL classrooms. Teachers always use the PPP (Present, Practice and Produce) form in lesson planning. They start with the presentation. Then, the students have to do some practice. Finally, the students are supposed to produce the new language knowledge and skills that they have learned.

During some informal discussions with some colleagues, I have found that some of them always use L2 and do not allow the students to use their L1. Some of them also use many techniques instead of using the L1 to convey the meaning. However, others think that L1 could be used with KG or Grade 1 students. Concerning grammar, it is often taught through the text with some external exercises. The students are not supposed to do many exercises on the grammatical rule. However, they are encouraged to identify it in the text and use it in speaking and writing. Speaking is paid more attention than the other skills. They consider the students' ability of speaking is the most important indicator of success or failure of the learning process. Many teachers, with whom I work, think of the communicative approach as the most effective English teaching approach that should be applied in the English classrooms. They also see the other methods, especially the grammar translation method as they are no longer appropriate in language teaching. However, it is obvious that the teachers sometimes integrate the principles of the other methods in their CLT practices. I think that this conception of the superiority of the communicative approach has resulted from their academic and professional backgrounds. Many English teaching qualifications such as CELTA are based on the communicative approach. In addition, many international course books such as Scott Foresman Reading Street and their teacher's editions are also based on the principles of the communicative approach.

#### **1.4.2 Challenges and difficulties**

Several challenges hinder English language teaching and learning in the Saudi context (Batawi 2006 & Alresheed 2012). Some of these challenges also exist in the Saudi international schools. One of these challenges is that the students do not have enough exposure to the language outside the classroom. Although, the Saudi community is a multinational one, English cannot be considered a second language. So, the students only practise English skills in the classroom with no real activities.

Another obstacle is the educational background of the parents. From my experience, I found that sometimes the parents have a negative impact on the students on their way of language learning or the language knowledge. Pronunciation is one item of the language knowledge that is affected by the parents' educational background. Many parents have been taught English with the grammar translation method. Thus, the way the students use at home in language learning is affected by this method especially in building vocabulary.

## **CHPATER (2)**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Overview: ELT Approaches and Methods**

Several attempts have been made to define the most effective method to teach English as a foreign language. These attempts resulted in different methods and approaches to English language teaching. These methods mainly have different targets and techniques of language teaching that result in several differences between them. The most prominent ELT methods include the Grammar translation method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual method, Total Physical Response (TPR), and the communicative language teaching (CLT). In the following paragraph, these different methods will be introduced in brief to highlight the main aspects of each method.

As discussed by several scholars such as Richards and Rodgers (1999), Brown (2000) and Zainuddin (2011), there are some key factors that result in the differences between the different methods. One important factor is the goal of language learning and teaching. Another important factor is the concept of language. There were different views about the nature of language. These different views about language in addition to the different targets of language learning resulted in the different methods of language teaching. The Grammar translation method mainly targets the reading skills and there is no emphasis on communication. This method pays attention to the grammatical structures and is mainly used in teaching Latin and Greek. The Direct method comes as a development of the grammar translation method. It targets the development of speakers and thinkers of the target language. The direct method is based on the direct use of the target language with avoiding the use of the native language. The Audio-lingual method, like the direct method, also targets the development of fluent speakers of the target language. However, this method is mainly based on habit formation to develop the language proficiency. TPR is mainly appropriate for the silent period when the students are still unable to respond verbally. Tools such as pictures, objects and realia are appropriate with

this method. The communicative approach has somehow a different goal which is a meaningful communication. This approach has been widely used in different contexts around the world. It has some core principles and aspects that will be presented in the following section in detail.

## **2.2 Principles of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

As defined by Richards and Rodgers (1999), Brown (2000), Richards (2006) and Zainuddin (2011), communicative language teaching is a set of principles about the language teaching process which includes goals, classroom activities and roles of the teacher and the learner. Concerning the goal, Brown (2000), Richards (2006) and Zainuddin (2011) see that communicative competence is the main goal of language teaching and learning. Communicative competence, as defined by Richards (2006), includes the ability to use the language in different contexts with different people and for different purposes. In addition, it contains the ability to use different kinds of communication strategies. Communicative competence as described by Brown (2000) consists of five components; grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic and strategic. Brown (2000) suggests some key rules to achieve communicative competence. One of these rules is that the grammar is only one part of communicative competence without neglecting the other parts. Another rule is that fluency could be more important than accuracy at times. One more rule is that teaching pronunciation is as important as teaching functional and sociolinguistic aspects of the language. Classroom activities according to CLT, as stated by Brown (2000) and Zainuddin (2011), aim at involving the learners in a functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Richards (2006) gives examples of classroom activities such as pair work and group work activities, role plays and project work instead of memorization of dialogues and drills. Concerning the role of the learners, Richards and Rodgers (1999), Brown (2000) and Richards (2006) show that the students should have more learning autonomy focusing on their own learning styles. In addition, these scholars describe the teacher's role as a facilitator or a guide. Richards and Rodgers (1999) show that this role has two main components. The first one is related to facilitating the learning process. The second one is based on acting as a participant model for the learners.

Richards (2006) shows that after the wide use of CLT, these principles have been updated. One new principle is that communication is a holistic process that includes different language skills. Another principle is that language learning is a gradual process that includes creative use of language and trial and error targeting an accurate and fluent use of language. One more principle is that effective learning and communication strategies are essential factors in the success of language learning.

### **2.3 Misconceptions about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Many scholars, such as Sato and Kleinsasser (1999), Thompson (1996) and Nurul Islam (2012) try to define teachers' awareness and practices of the communicative approach. Having examined the use of CLT in Japan, Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) find that most of the teachers' perceptions about CLT are based on their personal ideas and experiences more than academic literature.

Thompson (1996) and Nurul Islam (2012) argue that communicative language teaching is viewed by teachers and applied linguists as the most effective approach. On the other hand, Thompson (1996) and Nurul Islam (2012) show that many teachers have some misconceptions about the principles of the communicative approach. In the following section, some common misconceptions about CLT will be introduced.

One common misconception about the communicative approach is about teaching grammar. Thompson (1996) states that neglecting grammar in English teaching with focusing only on the meaning is one of the most persistent damaging misconceptions. He adds that grammar is an essential component of communicative competence which is the main goal of the communicative approach. Thompson (1996) sees that there are some reasons behind this misconception. One of these reasons is that some applied linguists as stated by Thompson (1996), called for the unimportance of teaching grammar. They thought that grammar could be acquired through exposure to language. Another reason behind this misconception is the negative attitude towards grammar translation method which is based on the heavy emphasis on structures.



Another misconception about the communicative approach is teaching only speaking. Thompson (1996) argues that there are two main reasons behind this misconception. First, there was a new trend in linguistics calling for the primacy of the spoken language. Another reason is that the most language uses of many learners are oral.

One more misconception identified by Thompson (1996) is the extensive use of pair work and role play activities. Thompson (1996) argues that these classroom activities can be effective in introducing new language items. However, pair work activities are not effective in all aspects of language as the learners do not have real choice to say or act more than they are told to say.

Nurul Islam (2012) identifies one more misconception which is not using error correction techniques. Many teachers as stated by Nurul Islam (2012) see that errors are replaced gradually by target-like forms. However, Nurul Islam (2012) shows that error correction is an important technique in the communicative approach.

## **2.4 Critiques of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

(CLT) has faced criticism by several scholars such as Klapper (2003) and Andrewes (2005 a). One of these criticisms is that being a core set of theories and principles, CLT does not have a specific pedagogical framework or an agreed version. Another criticism against CLT is that it is more connected to first language acquisition than second language acquisition. Klapper (2003) argues that the principles of CLT are mainly based on the theories of first language acquisition. Andrewes (2005 a) adds that the main reason for language learning which CLT was based on, is no longer appropriate. CLT proposes, as discussed by Andrewes (2005 a), that the typical foreign language learner is the person who learns a new language to deal with everyday situations in a foreign country or to communicate with foreign visitors in his/her country. This assumption, as described by Andrewes (2005 a) has changed over time and many other reasons have been emerging for learning a foreign language. One more criticism is the avoidance of using L1 in the classroom. Moreover, Andrewes (2005 a) shows that PPP (Present, Produce and Practice) lesson structure adopted by CLT has become inappropriate.

## **2.5 The Cultural Appropriateness of Communicative Language Teaching**

There is a dominant idea about CLT among teachers that it could be used everywhere (Bax 2003). Bax (2003) states that many teachers think of CLT as the most effective way that must be used in teaching English no matter what the context is. On the other hand, many scholars such as Bax (2003), Andrewes (2005 a, b) disagree with this conception about the cultural appropriateness of CLT. In addition, they see the context as an important factor in the language teaching process. Bax (2003) also refers to the importance of teachers' awareness about the contextual factors. Moreover, Andrewes (2005 b) shows that each group of students has special characteristics that affect the teaching process. Furthermore, Andrewes (2005 a) argues that the features of the context where CLT has emerged are not the same in many places around the world. As the students in many contexts do not have the same opportunity of exposure to language and they will not be able to use the target language until the next lesson. Thus, Andrewes (2005 b) sees that CLT is not appropriate in every context.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the cultural appropriateness of CLT in different contexts. One of these studies was conducted by Ellis (1996). This study mainly reaches some conclusions about the use of CLT in Asian contexts. The first conclusion is that the current background of the learners is so far from what they are expected to learn. Another conclusion is that many aspects of CLT are not appropriate in the Asian contexts. These aspects include process-oriented learning and focus on the meaning more than the form. Ellis (1996) thinks that these factors have resulted in the failure of CLT in the Asian contexts. He also sees that teachers should limit the gap between the principles of CLT and the context.

Another study about the appropriateness of CLT in China by Hu (2002) has reached the same conclusions of Ellis (1996). Hu (2002) CLT has not succeeded in achieving the target goals of teaching English in China. The main reason behind this failure is the contextual factors.

Chinese learners as described by Hu (2002) have different educational backgrounds that hinder the proper implementation of CLT. Hu (2002) emphasizing the same idea suggested by Bax (2003), Andrewes (2005 a) and Ellis (1996) that teachers should consider the Socio-cultural differences when selecting the appropriate way to teach English.

One more study about the appropriateness of CLT in Malaysian context is introduced by Raissi and Nor (2013). This study has been conducted in Malaysian secondary schools. Raissi and Nor (2013) have reached some findings about CLT in Malaysian secondary schools. They find that teachers have good awareness and attitude about the principles of CLT. However, many challenges faced the teachers when they use CLT. These challenges include facilities as well as the multicultural Malaysian community. On the other hand, Raissi and Nor (2013) argue that CLT is appropriate in the Malaysian context, however, it should be adapted by teachers to fit the characteristics of this context. Teachers think that some techniques of other approaches could be used in parallel with CLT techniques. Therefore, CLT could be more effective in their context.

There is a little information about the international schools in Saudi Arabia. There are nearly no studies conducted to explore the use of CLT in these schools. However, some studies have been done in this area in Saudi public schools. One of these studies was by Batawi (2006). This study consists of two phases: surveys and group discussions. 100 female teachers participated in filling in the surveys and twelve teachers took part in the group discussions. Batawi (2006) describes the teachers' practices as a combination between traditional and communicative approaches. In addition, she argues that there are some difficulties that hinder the use of CLT. These difficulties are resulted by the teacher, the learners and the educational system. Batawi (2006) refers to three factors that should be considered. These factors are the teacher training, the educational background of the learners and the research.

Another study has been made Al-Twairish (2009) to identify the impact of the communicative approach on speaking and listening skills. This study has been conducted on a group of students (37 students) of Saudi public schools. Al-Twairish (2009) concludes that CLT has positive impact on the development of speaking and listening skills of the students. It also shows that there should be a shift from the old

approaches to the communicative approach in Saudi public schools. This shift could occur by enhancing teachers' awareness about CLT and developing the national courses of language learning.

## **2.6 Recent Developments of Communicative Language Teaching**

As a result of the wide use of it, CLT has witnessed several developments that result in what we can call the extensions of CLT. Two Prominent extensions of CLT as described by Richards (2006) are content-based Instruction (CBI) and task-based Instruction (TBI). These methodologies are mainly based on the core principles of CLT; however, they take different routes to achieve the main goal of CLT which is the communicative competence.

Content-based Instruction as described by Duneas (2004) and Richards (2006) is mainly based on an idea that teaching should be centered on the content. In addition, the components of communicative competence will be linked to the content. CBI has three main assumptions as stated by Richards (2006). First, the language will be learned effectively when it is used to acquire information. In addition, learners' needs could be covered by CBI. Moreover, the content could help to connect and develop all the language skills. On the other hand, there are some concerns about CBI. One important concern as argued by Richards (2006) is that the extent of content could have a negative impact on language learning. For instance, learners could neglect grammatical accuracy and focus on the content instead.

Task-based Instruction as another extension of CLT is mainly based on using tasks in planning, teaching as well as classroom teaching (Nunan (2004) & Richards (2006) & Klapper (2003)). These tasks, as described by Richards (2006) and Nunan (2004), have some main characteristics. First, they are to be done or carried out by the learners' existing language resources. In addition, they include focus on meaning as well as the use of communication strategies. One important point about TBI is that it has a different lesson structure different from the regular PPP lesson form. This structure

starts with pre-task activities. Then, the task cycle will be carried out. This task cycle includes task, planning and reporting. Finally, the language focus will be the last stage that consists of analysis and practice.

## **2.7 Alternatives of Communicative Language Teaching**

The drawbacks of CLT have resulted in several attempts to deal with these drawbacks. One of these attempts has been made by Andrewes (2005 b). This attempt has been called the Post Communicative Approach and could be an upgrade of CLT rather a new approach. The Post Communicative Approach, as stated by Andrewes (2005 b), pays attention to some key elements. These elements include particularity, classroom culture; focus on form and content-based learning. Andrewes (2005 b) emphasizes on the validity of the other principles of CLT.

Another attempt that resulted from the drawbacks of CLT is the Context Approach. Bax (2003) has called for the context approach which is based on the importance of the contextual factors in language teaching. He criticized CLT for neglecting the context as an important factor in teaching English. The Context Approach as suggested by Bax (2003) is based on the context rather than the methodology. Bax (2003) shows that the teacher should analyze the context, and then select the appropriate ways to the target students.

## **CHAPTER (3)**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Questions/Aims**

This research mainly aims to answer the following questions;

1. To what extent do international school teachers in Saudi Arabia employ the practices of communicative language teaching (CLT)? Do they have any misconceptions about CLT?
2. Does CLT have any drawbacks from the point of view of teachers? Is it culturally appropriate to use CLT in the Saudi international schools?

The answer to the first question clarifies the current situation of English teaching in Saudi international schools. It also examines whether there are any misconceptions about the principles of CLT. The second question helps to identify the criticisms of CLT from the teachers' point of view. In addition, it investigates to what extent CLT is appropriate in Saudi international schools.

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

There are two main approaches to research; quantitative research and qualitative research (Thomas (2003), Anderson (2006), Dorneyei (2007), Holliday (2002), Richards (2003)). The main difference between these approaches is the goal of research. The quantitative approach aims at establishing statistical relationships and generalizable findings. So, it would be effective to use the quantitative approach with the first research question. As, this approach would be helpful in reaching some generalizations about CLT practices and misconceptions of teachers in Saudi international schools. On the other hand, the goal of the qualitative approach is to identify patterns and features and show different viewpoints and perspectives. So, this approach would be appropriate in identifying the drawbacks of CLT. Thus, this is based on the use of the two

approaches which is called the mixed methodology approach. This approach is also called “Pluralistic Research” (Anderson 2006). It is mainly a mixture of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. This approach has many advantages as it could be effective in the research development, increasing validity and developing integration.

### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

In this study, the data is collected through a close-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The close ended questionnaire is useful, as described by Dorneyei (2007), in collecting the quantitative data. It is based on the likert scale which maybe more appropriate in investigating the knowledge and practices of CLT (Dorneyei, 2007). The qualitative data is collected from the semi-structured interview.

The questionnaire as shown in Appendix 1 is the same one used and developed by Batawi (2006) however, it is adapted according to the literature and the research aims. This questionnaire as explained by Batawi (2006) is based on the key principles of CLT; communicative competence, teacher and learners’ roles, group work activities and error correction. Some modifications have been made in the original questionnaire developed by Batawi (2006). The questionnaire starts with a short introduction about the purpose of the research, followed by the consent form that should be read before filling in the questionnaire. More items about age, nationality, experience in Saudi international schools have been added to the first part. This part mainly aims at collecting biographical data about the teachers; age, experience in Saudi international schools, qualifications and nationality. A new part has been added to the questionnaire and it would be the second one. This part is a general question about the English teaching approaches. It works as an introduction to the questionnaire items that come in the third part. The third part includes 20 items divided into two sections. The last part found in the original will be removed. As the data about the knowledge and use of CLT as well as the other approaches, would be collected from the second and third parts. The questionnaire will be administered

online using Survey Monkey. Some strategies suggested by Dorneyei (2007) have been considered. These strategies are advance notice, communicating the purpose and importance of the questionnaire and respectable sponsorship. In addition, the questionnaire is piloted before using it officially. Three teachers have taken the questionnaire and give their feedback. In general, the teachers have found no difficulties when they did the questionnaire.

The interview (see appendix 2) is a semi-structured one which is mainly about the drawbacks and appropriateness of CLT in Saudi international schools. It is a written interview depending on the desire of the participant. It is held online using one of the net communication software such as SKYPE or even one of the social networks such as Facebook. The interview starts with general question about teaching English in Saudi international schools. Then, it is followed by some questions about the appropriateness of CLT principles in these schools. Finally, the drawbacks and criticism of CLT are discussed from the participants' point of view.

### **3.4 Sampling**

This study follows the convenience or opportunity sampling which is considered the most common sample type in L2 research (Dorneyei 2007). The samples used in this research are teachers from three Saudi international schools, one in Riyadh and two in Al Ahsa. Twenty one teachers have taken the close-ended questionnaire, only seventeen have fully completed it; four of them took the interview. The teachers are qualified and experienced male teachers. All of the teachers have at least B.A in English. All of them are Egyptian except one who is Sudanese. The teachers' first language is Arabic. Their ages are between twenty six and forty two. Their general experience in teaching English is at least five years. Their experience in Saudi international schools is at least two years.



### **3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Because of the mixed nature of the collected data, two different ways are used to analyze and interpret data (Bell 2010). For the quantitative data, there are some steps to analyze it. First, the questionnaires are checked and organized. Then, the Excel spreadsheets are used to do calculations. The frequency would be appropriate in this case, as it shows how many teachers have checked each answer. Finally, the data is shown in tables and interpreted in terms of the literature.

For the qualitative data, some procedures are used to analyze and interpret the data (Thomas 2003 & Holliday 2002). First, the raw data will be prepared. Then, it would be read in details and categorized. There will be some themes that may emerge from the data and the research aims and questions. These themes may include appropriate CLT principles, inappropriate CLT principles and contextual factors. The organization of the data will also be based on these themes. Some extracts from the raw data will be included. They will be followed by commentary that shows the researcher's thoughts about them. On the other hand, some raw data could be neglected as they may not relate to the research. At the end, the thematic organization would be checked regularly during the analysis process. These steps will help to make the research process transparent to the reader.

### **3.6 Research Issues**

#### **3.6.1 Ethical considerations**

Some ethical issues suggested by Heigham and Crocker (2009) would be considered when doing the study. These ethical issues are privacy and confidentiality, deception and consent, and trust and betrayal. First, pseudonyms will be used, so that the privacy of the participants' identities and point of views would be protected. In

addition, participants will be fully aware of the objectives of the questionnaire. The participants will also fill in a consent form before filling in the questionnaire.

### **3.6.2 Validity/reliability/ transferability**

Shenton (2004) refers to validity, reliability and transferability as key concepts which reflect the quality of the research. To establish these concepts in this study, some steps will be taken. First, the questionnaire items will be based on the research aims. The different processes such as data collection, sampling and data analysis are fully presented. The questionnaire will be also piloted as mentioned above before using it officially. It will be taken by five teachers to check its face and content validity. Then, the teachers' responses will be analyzed to check whether it will help to answer the research question or not. The teachers' feedback and comments about the questionnaire will be considered to identify the irrelevant items of the questionnaire to the research topic. Concerning the issue of reliability, some steps are taken to achieve the internal consistency of the questionnaire. One of these steps is to write at least two statements for the same idea but with different structure. In addition, these statements are randomly distributed in the questionnaire. Thus, the questionnaire could result in reliable findings about the research topic. In addition, the findings should be presented with reference to the contextual factors. Thus, the findings could be transferred and discussed in other contexts.

### **3.7 Practicalities and potential problems**

Some problems and challenges would be faced when doing this research. First, many teachers may not be motivated enough to answer the questionnaire questions effectively. The shortage of time is another obstacle in doing the research, as teachers are always busy, giving lessons and checking homework etc.

## **CHAPTER (4)**

### **RESULTS & ANALYSIS**

Two research tools have been used in the data collection process in order to find answers to the main research questions. A questionnaire has been used to collect quantitative data about the actual practices of CLT in Saudi international schools. Interviews have been held to collect qualitative data about the appropriateness of CLT in these schools. Therefore, the findings will be presented in two sections; Questionnaire (quantitative data) and Interviews (qualitative data).

#### **4.1 Questionnaire (Quantitative Data)**

The questionnaire has been taken by 21 teachers; only 17 teachers have fully completed it. The teachers' responses on the questionnaire have resulted in some findings about their actual teaching practices in terms of the core principles of CLT. These findings as well as the question items of the questionnaire will be categorized as following; frequently used teaching approaches, the goal of language learning and teaching, teaching grammar, fluency vs. accuracy, teaching pronunciation, the use of pair work, group work and project work, role of the teacher and the role of the learner.

##### **4.1.1 Frequently used teaching approaches**

Following the popular trend about ELT approaches, table (1) has shown that the communicative approach is the commonly used teaching approach by teachers (100%) in Saudi international schools. However, many teachers (64.7%) find it helpful to use CLT in parallel with other teaching methods. Several reasons could be behind this phenomenon. One of these reasons is that CLT could not be enough to achieve

the target learning outcomes. Another reason is that some principles of CLT could be inappropriate in Saudi international schools.

The most used teaching method with CLT is audio-lingual (35.29%). That means that despite its drawbacks, audio lingual method is still effective to achieve some of the target learning outcomes. In addition, the least used teaching method with CLT is grammar translation method (17.65%). This could be an indicator to the negative trend about the grammar translation method among teachers.

Teaching method	Frequency	Percentage
Grammar Translation Method	3	17.65%
Total Physical Response	5	29.41%
Direct Method	5	29.41%
Audio-Lingual Method	6	35.29%
Communicative Approach	17	100.00%

(Table 1)

#### **4.1.2 The goal of language learning**

Table (2) includes the responses to the question items; 9 and 18. It shows that communicative competence seems to be the main goal of learning English (94.12%). In addition, it is found that passing the final exams is not the students' main target when they learn English (88.23%). These results could be an indicator to the perceptions of the teachers more than their actual practices as will be shown in the responses of the interviews. In addition, teachers seem to be fully aware of the language nature as a means of communication. They do not deal with it as one of the school subjects.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	U
My students learn English to be able to communicate in everyday situations.	47.06% 8	47.06% 8	5.88% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
The main goal of learning English for my students is to pass the final exams.	0.00% 0	11.76% 2	11.76% 2	76.47% 13	0.00% 0

(Table 2)

### 4.1.3 Teaching Grammar

Table (3) includes the responses to the question items; 8, 15, 17 and 20. It suggests that grammar does not receive the most attention from teachers in Saudi international schools (88.23%). This result is also another indicator to the negative trend against grammar translation method. As, most of the teachers clearly disagree with the superiority of grammar. In addition, those teachers (88.24%) do not focus on teaching speaking and neglect grammar. They (94.12%) usually teach grammar in parallel with other parts of language knowledge. On the other hand, concerning the natural acquisition of grammar, teachers do not reach an agreement on this issue. Some teachers (52.94%) see that grammar could be acquired naturally through regular exposure to the language; however other teachers (47.06%) do not. That means that nearly all teachers teach grammar regularly, however not all of them see that important. Thus, teachers' practices not only depend on their perceptions but also could be based on the course books, school policy or any other contextual factors.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	U
Grammar is the most important part of the language knowledge that the learners should master.	0.00% 0	11.76% 2	58.82% 10	29.41% 5	0.00% 0
I do not need to teach grammar, as it could be acquired through the exposure to the language.	11.76% 2	41.18% 7	41.18% 7	5.88% 1	0.00% 0
I teach grammar as an essential part of the language knowledge that should be taught in parallel with the other parts.	0.00% 0	76.47% 13	17.65% 3	5.88% 1	0.00% 0
In my typical classroom, I teach only speaking, as I believe that it is the main goal of learning the language.	5.88% 1	5.88% 1	64.71% 11	23.53% 4	0.00% 0

(Table 3)

#### 4.1.4 Fluency vs. accuracy

Table (4) includes the responses to the question items; 7, 16 and 19. It suggests that many teachers in Saudi international schools make a certain balance between fluency and accuracy. They (64.70%) pay more attention to fluency and do not correct all the errors of the learners. On the other hand, many teachers (64.70%) do not neglect learners' errors at all, as they think that the errors are not replaced gradually by the target-like forms. The percentage resulted about this issue could not set a generalization about it. However, it could indicate that some teachers are still influenced by the old approaches in terms of error correction techniques.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	U
All the learners' errors should be corrected so that they could be better speakers.	5.88% 1	23.53% 4	52.94% 9	11.76% 2	5.88% 1
I focus on what my students are trying to say more than how they say it.	17.65% 3	47.06% 8	29.41% 5	0.00% 0	5.88% 1
I do not correct my students' errors as they will be replaced gradually by the target-like forms.	0.00% 0	35.29% 6	58.82% 10	5.88% 1	0.00% 0

(Table 4)

#### 4.1.5 Teaching pronunciation & Functional use of language

Table (5) includes the responses to the question items; 6 and 10. It shows that many teachers do not focus on the real activities on the account of teaching pronunciation. Many teachers (88.23%) see that pronunciation is an important part of language that should be taught regularly. That could be a result of teachers' interest in developing the accuracy in parallel with fluency. At the same time, they (100%) use authentic materials to involve their students in real activities. That is also another indicator for the teachers' perceptions about the language nature as a means of communication. It also shows that teaching in international schools is not based on traditional techniques.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	U
Pronunciation is an important part of language that should be taught regularly.	52.94% 9	35.29% 6	5.88% 1	0.00% 0	5.88% 1
Sometimes I use authentic materials such as magazines, newspapers or videos, etc. to support the course book.	70.59% 12	29.41% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

(Table 5)

#### 4.1.6 The use of pair work, group work and project work

Table (6) includes the responses to the question items; 4, 5, 11 and 17. It shows that pair work, group work and project work activities are replacing the memorization of dialogues and drills in Saudi international schools. Many teachers (64.71%) see that memorization of dialogues and drills are no longer appropriate. In addition, they (76.47%) see that the use of group work and pair work is helpful with their students. Moreover, the table shows that there is an extensive use of these activities, as many teachers (76.47%) use them nearly at every session. Many reasons could be behind the use of pair work in the international schools. These reasons include the teachers' awareness of the effectiveness of CLT, the schools' encouragement for using such techniques in the classrooms and the students' positive responses especially in terms of classroom management.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	U
Memorization of dialogues and drills are effective in developing the language skills of my students.	11.76% 2	23.53% 4	47.06% 8	17.65% 3	0.00% 0
The use of group work and pair work is not effective.	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.88% 1	94.12% 16	0.00% 0
I usually use the pair work and group work activities nearly at every session.	29.41% 5	47.06% 8	11.76% 2	0.00% 0	11.76% 2
The use of pair work, group work, role plays and project work is helpful in developing the language skills of students.	0.00% 0	76.47% 13	17.65% 3	5.88% 1	0.00% 0

(Table 6)



#### **4.1.7 Role of the teacher**

Table (7) includes the responses to the question items; 1, 2 and 12. It somehow shows a contradiction between the teachers' perceptions about the role of the teacher and their actual practices. Teachers (100%) see that the teacher should be a facilitator or guide. However, they (76.74%) think that the teacher should fully control the students to reach the target learning outcomes. Moreover, some teachers (47.06%) take most of the time presenting the new lesson and giving examples. These results indicate that teachers may be aware of the latest updates of teaching approaches; however they are still restricted by the traditional ways of teaching. Thus, it could be concluded that the development of teaching practices does not result only from the development of teachers' awareness. However all efforts of the school, teachers and community should be integrated to take the theory into practice.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	U
Presenting a new lesson and giving examples take most of the time in my typical classroom.	17.65% 3	29.41% 5	29.41% 5	17.65% 3	5.88% 1
The teacher should have full control over his students achieve the lesson objectives.	41.18% 7	35.29% 6	23.53% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
The teacher should be a facilitator or a guide rather than an instructor.	88.24% 15	11.76% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0

(Table 7)

#### **4.1.8 Role of the learners**

Table (8) includes the responses to the question items; 3 and 13. It shows that students' learning autonomy do not receive a great importance in Saudi international schools. Many teachers (88.23%) believe that students do not have the ability to decide on what they could learn or the way they learn it. In addition, this thought is reflected in the teaching practices of some teachers. As, they (41.17%) do not give the

students the opportunity to choose the topics they will learn. In general, the teachers' perceptions and the consequent teaching practices may reflect their educational background. As, many teachers might not get such a chance when they were students, therefore they could not imagine that their students could have learning autonomy. In addition, the educational system may have a negative impact as it may encourage the teachers to have more control over their students.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	U
In my typical classroom, I usually give my students the chance to choose the topics they will learn.	5.88% 1	35.29% 6	35.29% 6	5.88% 1	17.65% 3
Students cannot decide on what they could learn or the way they learn it.	0.00% 0	11.76% 2	58.82% 10	29.41% 5	0.00% 0

(Table 8)

## **4.2 Interviews (Qualitative Data)**

Four interviews have been held with four experienced teachers to collect qualitative data about the appropriateness of CLT principles in Saudi international schools. These interviews also highlight the role of the contextual factors in English language teaching and learning in these schools. The results of these interviews will be presented in three sections as follows;

### **4.2.1 Appropriate CLT principles**

Four principles of CLT have been described as appropriate to be used in Saudi international schools. These principles are teacher as a guide or facilitator, the use of pair work, group work and project work, focus on fluency and the avoidance of L1.

**a. Teacher as a guide or facilitator**

Being a guide or facilitator, Mr. MEM says “..... We should not spoon feed students, but we should only put them on the right track to search investigate and give them the chance to acquire the knowledge needed.” The teachers’ views about their roles confirm the findings of the questionnaire in terms of the same issue. Teachers are fully aware about their roles in terms of CLT principles. They are also aware of how to use it effectively. In addition, teachers seem to have no contextual obstacles against playing such a role.

**b. The use of pair work, group work and project work**

Mr. OI says “Doing it the proper way saves time and help deliver the information the way they would never forget.” Teachers’ responses in the interviews indicate that they do not have obstacles that hinder the use of group work and pair work activities with their students. On the contrary, they see that the use of these activities has a positive impact on the students’ performance. As, it motivates the students to involve in the classroom activities and makes them acquire the knowledge easily.

**c. Focus on fluency**

“Fluency is a step for achieving accuracy” Says Mr. MIA. Teachers are aware of the importance of developing learners’ fluency. They see that fluency and accuracy affect each other. Teachers’ responses indicate that they do not face any challenges when they focus on fluency. However, they show that it is important not to neglect accuracy. Otherwise, we will have fluent students with horrible grammar.

**d. The avoidance of L1**

“As it is said Arabic is the last resort” says Mr. MEM. Many factors may help to make avoiding L1 appropriate and helpful in Saudi international schools. These factors may include the teachers’ awareness about the importance of the extensive use of L2 to

develop the learners' fluency. Another factor could be the parents' positive attitude towards the language learning which motivates the students to accept the use of L2 most of the time even outside the classroom.

#### **4.2.2 Inappropriate CLT principles**

Three CLT principles have been described by teachers participating in the interviews as inappropriate to be used in Saudi international schools. These principles are students' learning autonomy, teaching English for communicative purposes and PPP lesson form.

##### **a. Students' learning autonomy**

Mr. MEM says "....in most cases we should stick to the curriculum." Teachers see that the syllabus outline is the main obstacle against the development of students' learning autonomy. Teachers are supposed to stick to the syllabus outline. However, that is not only the reason, as the teachers' misconception about students' abilities is also an obstacle same as found in the questionnaire results.

##### **b. Teaching English for communicative purposes**

"That's the main aim of studying languages ....we learn languages to know how to communicate." says Mr. H.A. Mr. MEM also says "We only take care of marks and grades rather than acquiring language." Teachers' views about this issue also confirm the questionnaire results. Teachers are aware of the communicative purposes of language learning. However, there are some obstacles that hinder achieving these purposes. One of these obstacles could be the assessment procedures that make the teachers and students mainly focus on the exams more than anything else.

##### **c. PPP lesson form**

"It is a traditional way of teaching, it contradicts with idea of a teacher as a facilitator and a guide." says Mr. MEM. Teachers' responses in the interviews show that PPP lesson form is no

longer appropriate. It does not give the students the opportunity to involve in the classroom activities. Teachers seem to use some alternatives such as task-based learning, but unconsciously.

### **4.2.3 Contextual factors influencing teaching English**

Mr. MEM says “Teaching in international schools is completely different for the student and the teacher as well.” He also says “Saudi people were not interested in English language, but after opening international schools, people became so interested and motivated to let their kids join this kind of education.” Mr. MIA also says “I do believe there are differences especially in the curricula”. The teachers’ responses during the interviews show that Saudi international schools as a context for English learning and teaching, has special features in terms of teachers’ qualifications, curriculum and administration. One important feature of the international schools, as stated by Mr. MEM that make them distinguished, is the integration of subjects. As, all subjects are delivered in English and there is an integration between the subject topics. Saudi international schools have a good impact on developing Saudi people’s awareness about English learning. They seem to change the parents’ negative attitude towards language learning that resulted from the public schools.

“If you compared students who lived in Saudi ARAMCO and students outside this semi American zone you will find a great difference” says Mr. MIA. All teachers agree that the contextual factors affect English language teaching. One of the main contextual factors suggested by teachers is parents’ educational background. Parents always have direct impact on their children’s performance especially, pronunciation. Thus, this impact could be positive or negative according to the educational background of parents. Other factors could also influence the use of CLT in Saudi international schools. These factors, as stated by teachers, include syllabus, administration, facilities and assessment. For instance, syllabus outline as described above is the main obstacle against the development of students’ learning autonomy.

## **CHAPTER (5)**

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings of the questionnaire and the interviews taken by teachers in Saudi international schools have highlighted the actual teaching practices in terms of CLT principles. In addition, they help to identify some of teachers' misconceptions about CLT principles in these schools. Moreover, they show the effect of the contextual factors on language learning and teaching. Furthermore, they help to reach some implications about the use of CLT. Thus, these findings will be discussed in four sections as follows.

#### **5.1 Actual Teaching Practices in Saudi International Schools**

Following the general trend about ELT approaches, teachers in Saudi international schools also adopt CLT as the main teaching approach. This could be found in all teachers' agreement about the use of CLT in their classroom. This phenomenon could have resulted from the educational background of the teacher as Saudi international schools usually recruit highly qualified and experienced teachers whose qualifications are mainly based on CLT principles. Another reason behind this phenomenon may be the use of international course books which usually depend on the principles of CLT. One more reason could be the practices of schools' policy makers who sometimes have a good impression about the use of CLT and they try to follow its principles in their schools. Thus, it is clear why CLT is usually adopted in these schools.

On the other hand, one important fact to be highlighted is that many teachers do not use only CLT. However, they use CLT as the main teaching approach; they use other methods in parallel with CLT. That means that teachers in Saudi international schools are aware of their students' needs and the appropriate way to meet these needs. Thus, CLT is not only used for the above mentioned factors but also because it is really appropriate to be used in these schools. Otherwise, teachers will give it up over time.

This case is the same as the case in the Malaysian secondary schools discussed by Raissi and Nor (2013). Teachers find that it would be more effective to combine some techniques of the old approaches with the techniques of CLT. Thus, it could be more appropriate when it is used in their context and more effective in achieving the target learning outcomes.

### **5.1.1 ELT practices in terms of CLT principles**

Teachers of Saudi international schools seem to be fully aware of nearly all principles of CLT which are suggested by Richards and Rodgers (1999), Brown (2000), Richards (2006) and Zainuddin (2011). They employ most of these principles in their teaching practices. Their teaching mainly aims at developing communicative competence. They pay normal attention to grammar as essential part of language knowledge. Concerning the issue of fluency and accuracy, teachers in these schools seem to be aware of the relation between both of them in terms of CLT principles. They focus on fluency more than accuracy. In addition, they use appropriate error correction techniques that give the students the space to use the language fluently without much interruption. Teachers of Saudi international schools pay attention to teaching pronunciation. They also involve their students in real activities by using authentic materials. Concerning the use of pair work and group work activities, teachers see them as powerful tools that work effectively with their students. They also no longer depend on the memorization of dialogues and drills in developing the learners' language skills any more. On the other hand, teachers seem to have some practices in terms of teacher's role and learner's role that do not follow CLT principles. Although they believe that teacher should be a facilitator or a guide which is one of CLT principles, their actual practices seem somehow different. Teachers take much time presenting new lessons and giving examples. In addition, they fully control the learning process to achieve the target learning outcomes. Concerning the issue of learner's role, teachers do not believe in CLT principle that focuses on the importance of students' learning autonomy. They think that students cannot decide on what they

learn. Thus, they do not give their students the opportunity to choose the topic that they will learn.

Although, both exist in the Saudi context, the case in public schools introduced by Batawi (2006) is completely different from the case in the international schools. Teachers of public schools do not employ nearly all the principles of CLT. They mainly depend on the techniques of other approaches especially grammar translation method. In addition, teachers even seem to be not aware of the principles of CLT.

### **5.1.2 Misconceptions about CLT**

In the light of the argument of Sato and Kleinsasser (1999), Thompson (1996) and Nurul Islam (2012) about the misconceptions about CLT, some teachers in Saudi international schools seem to have two main misconceptions. One of these misconceptions is about teaching grammar. Some teachers think that it is not important to teach grammar as it could be acquired naturally through the regular exposure to the language. This misconception could be, as argued by Thompson (1996), a result for the negative trend against the rules of grammar translation method, which grammar receives the most attention in its principles. Another misconception is about the use of pair work and group work activities. Many teachers in Saudi international schools seem to use these activities extensively. This misconception could be resulted from the academic supervision or the curricula. From my experience as a teacher in a Saudi international school, I observed that academic supervisors usually concentrate on the use of pair work and group work as indicators of the good performance of teaching. In addition, many course books usually use these activities in their daily plans which exist in the teachers' editions. On the other hand, teachers do not have the other two misconceptions about CLT discussed by Thompson (1996) and Nurul Islam (2012). They do not focus on speaking only as the main goal of language learning. In addition, they do not ignore error correction in their teaching practices. They do not think that the errors would be replaced gradually



by target-like forms. Errors should be corrected regularly without negative effect on fluency.

## **5.2 The Appropriateness of CLT Principles in Saudi International Schools**

CLT principles seem to be partially appropriate in Saudi international schools. Four principles are seen to be appropriate which are teacher as a guide or facilitator, the use of pair work, group work and project work, focus on fluency and the avoidance of L1. Teachers in Saudi international schools see that these principles are effective and have a good impact on the learning process. However, some issues should be considered when applying these principles. One of these issues is that teachers' role as a facilitator or guide could be inappropriate to the early stages. As suggested by the teachers of the early stages, students of this age need more help than the older students. Thus, it would be not appropriate to just guide the students in the classroom. However, they need the teacher put them on the right track and provide them with regular assistance. Another issue is that the focus on fluency does not mean neglecting accuracy. Moreover, the proper implementation of pair work and group work activities is a crucial factor in making them effective.

On the other hand, three other principles are thought to be inappropriate which are students' learning autonomy, teaching for communicative purposes and PPP lesson form. Concerning the students' learning autonomy and teaching for communicative purposes, teachers see that they are important and could be effective if they are used. However, they face many obstacles when they are applied in the classroom. The main obstacle is the educational system which includes restricted syllabus outlines and traditional assessment procedures that do not suit CLT principles. Thus, we can consider these principles appropriate if we overcome challenges that hinder the use of them.

Generally, the case in Saudi international schools are somehow the same as the Malaysian context (Raissi and Nor, 2013) where teachers have good awareness and attitude about the principles of CLT. However, the teachers face many challenges when they use CLT.

### **5.3 The Contextual Factors Influencing ELT in Saudi International Schools**

Saudi international schools as a context, have some features that make it different from the other contexts. For instance, although these schools exist in the same country with the Saudi public schools, they are completely different. They have differences in teachers, curriculum and even the background of students. Thus, it is not a surprise to find that CLT is adopted in Saudi international schools but not in the public schools. This fact proves the idea of Bax (2003), Andrewes (2005 a, b) that context is an important factor in learning process.

As argued by Bax (2003), Andrewes (2005 a, b), ELT in Saudi international schools is affected by the contextual factors. These factors have both positive and negative impacts on ELT in these schools. One of the positive factors is the educational background of the learners. Unlike the Asian and Chinese cases discussed by Ellis (1996) and Hu (2002) and the case of Saudi public schools introduced by Batawi (2006), the educational background of the learners has a good impact on the learning process. The learners usually start learning in the international schools when they are four or five years old. So, their educational background is built using the principles of CLT. In addition, the students' parents in most cases are influenced by the western education which shares the core principles of CLT. Especially, some of them have received high degrees from western universities. On the other hand, the contextual factors such as the Saudi educational system that includes the restrictions of syllabus outlines and the traditional assessment procedures negatively affect the use of CLT in Saudi international schools. For instance, learners' autonomy and communicative purposes of language learning are hindered by these negative factors.

## **IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION**

Several implications may emerge from this study about CLT practices in Saudi international schools. One of these implications is the focus on the importance of context. Context is an important factor that influences the selection of teaching approaches. That means that teachers, school administrators and policy makers should consider it when any plans related to the learning process are being set. Another point is that CLT is found to be somehow appropriate in Saudi international schools. However, this finding may change in the future as a result of any changes in the context. In addition, it is important for the policy makers to start to take steps in order to overcome the challenges such as assessment procedures and syllabus outlines that hinder the use of CLT in these schools. These steps could include the development of testing and assessment so that it could focus on the target objective of language learning, which is communicative competence. Another step could be giving the teachers more flexibility in terms of syllabus outlines so that they could be able to make the curriculum suit the students' features. Another important point is that teachers' awareness about CLT principles should be developed to correct any misconceptions about it. That could happen by providing the teachers with regular trainings to refresh their knowledge about language teaching.

Teachers, programme directors and researchers would be interested in such study. Teachers could use this study as a guide when they start teaching English in Saudi international schools. Especially, most teachers who come to teach in these schools are not Saudi nationals. In addition, program directors could consider the findings of this research when they set the educational policy and plans for their institutions. Moreover, this study could be a basis for more research about teaching approaches in Saudi Arabia.

To conclude, this research mainly explores the use of CLT in Saudi international schools. It tries to identify the perceptions and practices of teachers in these schools. In addition, it investigates the appropriateness of CLT principles in these schools. Although, the samples could not be

enough to set general statements about these issues, this research study could be a basis for more research about ELT in Saudi international schools. As discussed before, these schools have a great importance in terms of English teaching in the Saudi context. Thus, it is essential that this kind of schools should receive more attention from researchers in this area.

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## Appendix 1

### Exploring CLT Practices in Saudi International Schools

#### CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project,
- which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations
- if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form
- all information I give will be treated as confidential
- the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

(Signature of participant)

(Date)

.....

.....

(Printed name of participant)

.....

Contact phone number of researcher(s): 00201111170395

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

.....

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Revised March 2013



## CLT Practices in Saudi International Schools

### I. Please give information about yourself for each of the items below.

- Name (Optional): .....
- Age: .....
- Nationality: .....
- Mother tongue: .....
- How long have you been teaching English?  
.....
- How long have you been teaching English in Saudi international schools?  
.....
- Which grade (s) are you teaching?  
.....
- Do you have any English teaching qualifications? If yes, what are they? (e.g. B.A, CELTA, DELTA, TESOL etc.)  
.....

### II. Which of these English teaching approaches do you usually use in your classroom? (You can select more than once)

- Grammar Translation Method
- Direct Method
- Total Physical Response
- Audio-lingual method
- Communicative Language Teaching

Other (Please Specify): .....

Please read each statement and **circle one appropriate answer.**

Strongly Agree (SA)

Agree (A)

Disagree (D)

Strongly Disagree (SD)

Uncertain (U) [You are not exactly sure what the statement means]

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	U
1. Presenting a new lesson and giving examples take most of the time in my typical class.					
2. Teachers should have a full control over his students to achieve the lesson objectives.					
3. In my typical classroom, I usually give my students the chance to choose the topics they will learn.					
4. Memorization of dialogues and drills are effective in developing the language skills of my students.					
5. The use of group work and pair work is not effective.					
6. Sometimes I use authentic materials such as magazines, newspapers or videos, etc. to support the course book.					
7. All the learners' errors should be corrected so that they could be better speakers.					
8. Grammar is the most important part of the language knowledge that the learners should master.					
9. My students learn English to be able to communicate in everyday situations.					
10. Pronunciation is an important part of language					

that should be taught regularly.					
11. I usually use the pair work and group work activities nearly at every session.					
12. The teacher should be a facilitator or a guide rather than an instructor.					
13. Students cannot decide on what they could learn or the way they learn it.					
14. The use of pair work, group work, role plays and project work is helpful in developing the language skills of students.					
15. I do not need to teach grammar, as it could be acquired through the exposure to the language.					
16. I focus on what my students are trying to say more than how they say it.					
17. I teach grammar as one of the language knowledge that should be taught in parallel with the other parts.					
18. The main goal of learning English for my students is to pass the final exams.					
19. I do not correct my students' errors as they will be replaced gradually by the target-like forms.					
20. In my typical classroom, I teach only speaking, as I believe that it is the main goal of learning the language.					

(Adapted from Batawi, 2006)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Guided Interview Questions**

#### **The appropriateness of CLT in Saudi international schools (Semi-structured interview)**

1. How long have you been teaching in Saudi international schools?
2. After these years of experience, what do you think of EFL teaching in these schools?
3. Which of the following is culturally appropriate to be applied in teaching English in Saudi international schools? Please Explain.
  - Teacher of English as a facilitator or guide
  - Students have learning autonomy in choosing the topics they will learn and the way of learning these topics.
  - The use of pair work, group work and project work activities
  - Focusing on the fluency more than the accuracy
  - Teaching English for communicative purposes
  - The avoidance of L1 in EFL classroom
  - PPP (Present – Produce – Practice) lesson form
4. Do the contextual factors (e.g. the educational background of parents) influence teaching English in Saudi international schools?
5. Can you think of any other factors that can influence teaching English in Saudi international schools?
6. Can you think of any challenges to using CLT in Saudi international schools?

## Appendix 3

### Certificate of ethical research approval DISSERTATION/THESIS

YOUR STUDENT NO: 610058427

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT: Exploring CLT Practices in Saudi International Schools

**1. Brief description of your research project:**

This research project mainly aims at investigating the actual teaching practices in the Saudi international schools in terms of the principles of communicative language teaching. It also explores the drawbacks of CLT from the teachers' perspective. In addition, the teachers' ideas about the improvement of CLT will be discussed. Little research has been conducted on English teaching approaches in the Saudi international schools. Thus, this research could be a basis for more research about this area. It could also be a guide for teachers and educational administrators in this kind of schools.

**2. Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

The participants of this research will be teachers of English in Saudi international schools. They are experienced teachers who have worked in Saudi international schools for at least two years. They will be male teachers who are 28 – 40 years old. They work in schools located in Riyadh and Eastern Province.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

3. **Informed consent:** Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents. Each consent form **MUST** be personalised with your contact details. The participants will sign the consent form before filling in the questionnaire or taking the interview. This form will be attached to the online questionnaire. The participants will not be able to start doing the questionnaire before signing the form. In addition, the form will be emailed to the participants in the case of the interview. The participants will send back the completed form so that they could take the interview.

4. **anonymity and confidentiality**

The identity of participants will be anonymous as, pseudonyms will be used to protect it. So, that will protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' views and identities. In addition, all the participants will be aware of the objectives of the research. Moreover, they will be fully aware and controlling the information that he gives. As, the answers to the questionnaires and the interviews will be written not oral.

5. **Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: March 2013

The research project will be based on the mixed approach. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected. Questionnaires and interviews will be used to collect the target data. The questionnaires will be filled in online using survey monkey. The interviews will also be held online using one of the communication softwares. The frequency calculations will be used to analyze the quantitative data. The qualitative data will be categorized and coded in terms of the research questions. In addition, there will be enough time for the participants to fill in the questionnaires. They will also choose the suitable time to take the interview.

6. Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires, or All completed questionnaires and interview texts will be protected by a username and password and saved on the researcher's Laptop. In addition, the accounts used for the designing the questionnaires or holding the interviews will be secured.

7. special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.

N/A

8. Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

N/A

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your dissertation tutor to sign. It then passes to the countersigning tutor to be checked and if satisfactory, approved. The countersigning tutor will forward it to Jess Barrett in the Research Office. A unique reference will be added and the certificate returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation.*  
**NB. PLEASE DO NOT USE STAPLES AS ALL THE DOCUMENTS NEED TO BE PHOTOCOPIED BEFORE BEING RETURNED TO YOU.**

*N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

This project has been approved for the period: 15 July 2014 until: Oct 2015

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): [Signature] date: 15/07/2014

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report (if applicable) and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

GSE unique approval reference: M/13/14/69

Signed: [Signature] date: 16/7/14

Countersigning Tutor / Chair of School Ethics Committee (please delete as applicable)

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: March 2013